

ECONOMIC STRATEGY REPORT, FEBRUARY 2013



NORTHPORT

LEELANAU TOWNSHIP



DESIGNING AND ACHIEVING OUR POTENTIAL

A collaborative effort between
Leelanau Township and the Village of Northport,
supported by the Leelanau Township Community Foundation
www.northportmi.org

VILLAGE OF NORTHPORT

PRESIDENT

Barb Von Voigtlander

LEELANAU TOWNSHIP

SUPERVISOR

Doug Scripps

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Andy Thomas	Jeff Tropf
Ann Marie Mitchell	Jim Neve
Barb Von Voigtlander	Jim Root
Bill Hendry	Joan TenBrock
Brian Mitchell	Joanne Gasco
Bruce Viger	Karen Cross
Chris McCann	Kathy Walraven
Erik Owen	Lee Gardner
Fred Steffens	Pamela Grath
Gene Garthe	Todd Huck
Greg King	

CONSULTANT TEAM

Beckett & Raeder, Inc.

THANKS TO

Northport-Omena Chamber of Commerce

The Northport Highlands



DESIGNING AND ACHIEVING OUR POTENTIAL ECONOMIC STRATEGY REPORT, FEBRUARY 2013

INTRODUCTION	4
EXISTING CONDITIONS	5
COMMUNITY PRIORITIES	6
STRATEGIES	14
IMPLEMENTATION	18

INTRODUCTION



For the first time in Leelanau/Northport history, two local units of government and a nonprofit community corporation have come together to help realize their full potential. This report represents the combined wisdom and talent in the Village of Northport, Leelanau Township, and the Leelanau Township Community Foundation, fully aligned and dedicated to strengthening their common good.

Situated on the historic waterfront region on the western shore of Grand Traverse Bay, citizens wish the Northport / Leelanau area to accommodate multiple purposes and users, now and in the future. This report presents a community-driven vision of a revitalized core, achievable strategies to be used in pursuit of that vision, and an implementation plan with specific actions and responsibilities.

To accomplish this, a Leadership Team of community representatives joined up with the consulting firm of Beckett & Raeder, Inc. Together, the teams reviewed existing plans, conducted a site assessment, hosted a Community Engagement Session, interviewed stakeholders, and surveyed the public to determine citizens' priorities and preferred methods of achieving them.

Once these priorities and methods were firmly established, the Leadership Team turned to implementation. The fuller understanding of the issues raised by the community helped shape the concrete strategies formulated to progress toward that preferred vision, and in turn, the strategies' details helped match them with a timeline for completion and a responsible party.



EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following information is taken from the 2009 site study titled
“Future By Design Northport: Creating a Sustainable Coastal Community,”

Opportunities identified by the Streets Team include new streetlights, improved sidewalk width, curbing, stormwater drainage, a median island on Nagonaba Street, crosswalks, irrigation for planters, and the rerouting of heavy truck traffic out of the village core. Many structures on Waukazoo are vacant or seasonal, and visually convey their lack of use through an overgrown appearance. The low density and building placement on Nagonaba Street combine with its expansive width to provide a more suitable environment for cars than pedestrians; although it provides a direct link with the waterfront, its focus is not directed there. Mill Street can be characterized as attractive and tree-lined.

STREETSCAPE

Parking is generally adequate except during special events, but it is provided in the form of undesirable expanses of parking lot lining Nagonaba and Waukazoo Streets. Existing rear and on-street parking alone would not offer adequate parking.

PARKING

The Pathways Team has cut some connective paths and plans to make more. Walkways need integrating with the shoreline, including pedestrian links from the hill to the waterfront. The link from Mill Street to the waterfront is residential and could be improved with more sidewalks.

CONNECTIVITY

Wayfinding is inadequate, particularly to and about the waterfront district. The waterfront lacks a public draw, and it is difficult to distinguish one's arrival to it. This is particularly true of the Main-to-Bay Street approach terminating in an overgrown park space with a closed and dilapidated restroom. Additionally, opportunities exist to capture the attention of travelers to and from the lighthouse. The Visitors' Center, which should be the obvious first stop in town, is presently unattended.

WAYFINDING

Architectural consistency is lacking throughout the Village of Northport. At the waterfront, the sheds, baths, and pumphouse are not cohesive. On Waukazoo Street, residential uses mix with businesses; on Nagonaba Street, residentially styled commercial uses sit beside traditional commercial storefronts. Mill Street architecture also reflects its mix of uses. Overall, “[t]he built environment is dated, building facades are in need of upgrades, and a ‘designed streetscape character’ is almost nonexistent.”

ARCHITECTURE

The business mix in Northport is not cohesive, functioning more as a collection of individual establishments than as a unified commercial district. The placement of businesses along three different streets in this small community may dilute the district, as may the mixture of single-family homes within the village core. Formerly attractive properties line the main roads, but they are intermixed with expanses of properties which are underutilized or overgrown.

BUSINESS MIX

The Mill Street bridge (culvert) over Mill Pond could provide a nature-focused point of interest within the Village core. Vegetative growth at the South Beach requires cleanup.

ENVIRONMENT

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

A Community Engagement Session was held for the Village of Northport / Leelanau Township community at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 20 2012 in Northport Public School's small gym. It was attended by 117 persons, who worked in 20 small groups of about six people per table.

As the session began, attendees responded to a survey about previously proposed community priorities and recent (within 10 years) community accomplishments, which the Leadership Team also took. Participants then completed exercises about Northport and Leelanau's successes and challenges, both past and future. At the conclusion of the Community Engagement Meeting, each group's answer to the question "What needs to be accomplished?" was hung on the wall for participants to vote on as they departed. The results formed the community's "collective priorities."

After the community engagement session had concluded and its results had been tallied, these priorities were presented to the entire Leelanau Township and Village of Northport community to be confirmed via survey. Surveys were available at Northport Public Library, the Northport Village Office, the Leelanau Township Office, from members of the Leadership Team, and online at the project's website; they were also distributed at Tom's Market, Northport Highlands, Leelanau Wine Cellars, Knot Just a Bar, the Leelanau Children's Center, Music in the Park, and other local businesses. During the survey's open period from late August until mid-September, 172 persons completed it. In addition to tabulation for comparison with the Community Engagement session as shown on page 8-9, survey results were cross-tabulated by age, jurisdiction, and residency status of the respondents (page 10).

5 HIGHEST PRIORITIES TO BE ACCOMPLISHED

Develop year-round business opportunities	61.2%	71.4%
Good long-term economic plan to improve community	47.9%	64.3%
Job creation; make it easier to do business	47.9%	50%
Overnight accommodations	34.7%	50%
Promote the area, invest in appearances	30.6%	35.7%
Government grants for development	—	35.7%
Business incentives	—	35.7%

3 GREATEST RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Sewer project	57.3%	92.9%
Waterfront improvement project (underway)	46.2%	50%
Northport Community Arts Center	44.4%	—
Waukazoo Street revival	—	35.7%

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

WHAT WE DID WELL

Sewer project
Waterfront development
New marina
Northport Community Arts Center



WHAT WE COULD HAVE DONE BETTER

More business
Sewer project process
Lodging facilities
Streetscape

BARRIERS

Financing
Resistance to change
Leadership and politics
Lack of wifi



KEY PLAYERS

Village government
Township government
Chamber of Commerce
Leelanau Twp Community Foundation

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

COLLECTIVE PRIORITIZATION

engagement session attendees	Wi-fi downtown and township	38	32.5%	1
	Coordinating marketing and promotion; one web site, better “story”	30	25.6%	2
	Boutique / specialized community college; tech and business school	30	25.6%	3
	Consolidate village and township governments	30	25.6%	4
	Streetscape improvements	24	20.5%	5
	Establish a DDA	21	17.9%	6
	Increase agri-business - grow and processing	20	17.1%	7
	Jobs; tourism; more private enterprise	16	13.7%	8
	Ferry service	16	13.7%	9
	Recreation trails and opportunities	13	11.1%	10
	Maximize waterfront as a public space	9	7.7%	11
	Attract young families	9	7.7%	12
	Cleaning business district; improve building facades	8	6.8%	13
	Affordable housing, including rentals	7	6.0%	14
	Harness local artistic and creative opportunities and facilities	6	5.1%	15
	Increase winter recreation opportunities	5	4.3%	16
	Attract and increase ethnic diversity	3	2.6%	17
	Improve and support medical facilities	3	2.6%	18
	Water-related events	3	2.6%	19
	Year round fitness / health resort	2	1.7%	20
	Develop and maintain existing parks	2	1.7%	21
	Expand agri-tourism	1	0.9%	22
	Maximize investment in Northport Public Schools	1	0.9%	23
	Walkable community	1	0.9%	24
	Provide scholarships to out-of-district students for K-12	0	0.0%	25
	Attract retirees	0	0.0%	26

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

1	Jobs; tourism; more private enterprise	82	47.7%
2	Attract young families	76	44.2%
3	Consolidate village and township governments	55	32.0%
4	Affordable housing, including rentals	53	30.8%
5	Wi-fi for downtown and township	51	29.7%
6	Improve and support medical facilities	50	29.1%
7	Clean up business district; improve building facades	41	23.8%
8	Develop and maintain existing parks	38	22.1%
9	Maximize investment in Northport Public Schools	38	22.1%
10	Increase winter recreation opportunities	36	20.9%
11	Maximize waterfront as a public space	36	20.9%
12	Recreation trails and opportunities	34	19.8%
13	Streetscape improvements	34	19.8%
14	Increase agri-business - grow and processing	26	15.1%
15	Walkable community	25	14.5%
16	Harness local artistic and creative opportunities and facilities	24	14.0%
17	Year round fitness / health resort	22	12.8%
18	Water-related events	21	12.2%
19	Ferry service	21	12.2%
20	Coordinating marketing and promotion; one web site, better "story"	20	11.6%
21	Expand agri-tourism	15	8.7%
22	Establish a Downtown Development Authority	13	7.6%
23	Boutique / specialized community college; tech and business school	12	7.0%
24	Attract and increase ethnic diversity	11	6.4%
25	Provide scholarships to out-of-district K-12 students	10	5.8%
26	Attract retirees	8	4.7%

community survey

Red boxes indicate the top five priorities as determined by attendees at the Citizen Engagement Session

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

UNDER 18	Wi-fi for downtown and township	52.5%
	Jobs; tourism; more private enterprise	40%
	Increase winter recreation opportunities	37.5%
	Attract young families	35%
	Water-related events	30%
	Affordable housing, including rentals	30%
AGES 18-44	Jobs; tourism; more private enterprise	53.8%
	Attract young families	50%
	Affordable housing, including rentals	42.3%
	Improve and support medical facilities	42.3%
	Increase winter recreation opportunities	30.8%
	Increase agri-business - grow and processing	30.8%
	Attract and increase ethnic diversity	23.1%
	Clean up business district; improve building facades	23.1%
AGES 45-64	Attract young families	54.2%
	Jobs; tourism; more private enterprise	54.2%
	Affordable housing, including rentals	37.5%
	Consolidate village and township governments	37.5%
	Maximize waterfront as a public space	29.2%
	Improve and support medical facilities	29.2%
	Develop and maintain existing parks	25%
	Clean up business district; improve building facades	25%
AGES 65+	Consolidate village and township governments	52.3%
	Jobs; tourism; more private enterprise	38.6%
	Improve and support medical facilities	36.4%
	Attract young families	34.1%
	Wi-fi for downtown and township	29.5%
	Maximize investment in Northport Public Schools	29.5%
VILLAGE OF NORTHPORT	Attract young families	43.8%
	Jobs; tourism; more private enterprise	42.5%
	Improve and support medical facilities	37%
	Wi-fi for downtown and township	32.9%
	Affordable housing, including rentals	30.1%
	Maximize investment in Northport Public Schools	30.1%
LEELANAU TOWNSHIP	Jobs; tourism; more private enterprise	50%
	Attract young families	46.1%
	Affordable housing, including rentals	34.2%
	Wi-fi for downtown and township	31.6%
	Maximize waterfront as a public space	26.3%
	Consolidate village and township governments	26.3%
YEAR-ROUND RESIDENTS	Jobs; tourism; more private enterprise	47.3%
	Attract young families	45.8%
	Affordable housing, including rentals	36.6%
	Wi-fi for downtown and township	32.1%
	Improve and support medical facilities	30.5%

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Interviews of stakeholders identified by the Leadership Team were conducted as part of the community engagement process. Most were conducted in person, but some interviewees completed the survey individually. These confidential stakeholder interviews conducted by a neutral/third party (Beckett & Raeder) uncover information that people might not share in a public forum and that local team members cannot possibly know because of their closeness to the project and their history with the area and the people. Through these interviews, Beckett & Raeder can find out what people are really thinking and doing. They almost always prove to be an invaluable source of information and give the team a clear understanding of the political and social context for the project. Confidential interviews should not be confused with “exclusive closed door” meetings—no decisions are being made in these meetings; they are solely information-gathering exercises. Although they are initiated by invitation, anyone can and should be included upon request. The confidential interview is just one outreach method of many employed.

Respondents had lived in the Northport area an average of 22.2 years (n=9), ranging from 2 to 52 years. They had worked or had a business in the area an average of 12.2 years (n=5), with a range of 2 to 20 years. Stakeholder respondents employed an

average of 33 people per interviewee (n=6). The range stretched from 107 people during the calendar year to zero employees; 32 seasonal full-time employees were reported.

Of the five interviewees who answered the question, “Is there growth potential to increase business and create more jobs?” all answered affirmatively. One reply included the qualifier “as long as there are activities and special events to draw people here.” When asked what factors would contribute to growth,



respondents cited an encouraging reception from the Village Council and the public, an expanded and better-organized retail sector, framing Northport as a destination, improving the appearance of downtown by polishing it up, expanding product distribution into other states, the availability of affordable housing, and more slips in the marina. The long list of Northport’s strengths was topped by job-based reloca-

tion and the attraction of water. “The marina is better than Leland and Sutton’s Bay,” said one respondent. Another recounted that she accepted her job offer based on her first impression of “a cute little town. Then I learned about the history and was amazed—it was a huge hub of commerce and people in the past. There is no evidence of this history in the community...many don’t have a sense of that. Leelanau County was the “Cherry Capital of the World.” Folks were also influenced strongly by the beauty of the area (“the light here on the 45th parallel is the same as the Monet Gardens”) and “the wonderful people.” “Community means something different up here,” said one respondent. “When I lived in Detroit and you heard an ambulance, no one cared. When you live here and hear an ambulance, you know it’s someone you know.” This sense of community stretched past Leelanau’s geographical borders, as evidenced by two replies

citing a long-held desire to return to Northport after having moved away. Two others migrated permanently after many years of vacationing here. Northport Public Schools, the lighthouse, local events, and the Northport Community Arts Center were all also mentioned by two respondents. Other reasons included wineries, four seasons, Braman Recreational Area, Village Voices, Northport Community Band, wild animals, farmland, a diver-

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

sified economy, mixed age groups, retired people, the shared desire to keep Northport “quaint,” and “a little bit of something for everyone in the area as a whole.”

Stakeholders’ jobs notwithstanding, the issue of underemployment threaded through all of the interviews. Asked about the area’s weaknesses, respondents named lack of year-round jobs, lack of jobs for young people with families, inability to get two steady incomes, and not enough opportunity for work. One respondent also cited “no trained workers” and one said it was “hard to find quality people,” perhaps suggesting a chicken-and-egg dimension to the problem—as another respondent noted, “People move where there is work.” (Or at least, they do if they can find a home: one employer reported having “lost a number of good employees because they don’t have any place to live.” Another participant stated that the “cost of living and cost of housing” would have to be more affordable in order to attract younger families to the area.) One respondent clarified that although there are some tourism and agriculture jobs available, prospective residents may “fear that there isn’t the depth of jobs here in case there is a job loss.” Some of the actions suggested to attract younger families with children to the area were focused on this lack of depth: light manufacturing jobs and home-based or location-independent businesses were recommended. Again underscoring the relationship between jobs and available workforce, however, one interviewee pointed out that “demographics have changed so that

the area is not friendly to technical businesses.”

Winter posed its own set of obstacles, including severely curtailed walkability due to lack of snow removal. It was also cited as a potential factor in discouraging business: not enough businesses stay open all year to counter the “perception that no one is open” in the off-season, and new businesses find such seasonal limitations to be prohibitive. “Summer is a big boom, and then it falls off” summarized one participant who followed the



comment with a suggestion for an RV park. Other drags on the business community included “lack of consistent hours” and “lack of organization.” “How do we come together so there is cross-marketing?” wondered one respondent, noting that a coupon program had failed due to lack of participation. Material weaknesses included the appearance of deferred maintenance in the downtown area, which one responded characterized as “ratty buildings” and noted that “money attracts money, and if the buildings were cleaned up it may attract new business.” Lack of high speed internet and wayfinding were also cited.

Stakeholders felt that geography and an insular mindset contributed to Northport’s description as “the peninsula’s best-kept secret.” “Transportation is a problem,” said one, going on to describe a car ferry that sank on its maiden voyage and a 300-room waterfront hotel that burned down on its opening night. Several interviewees agreed that Northport’s location at “the end of the line” means the community is “not on the way anywhere,” so “you have to work to be the destination.” One respondent illustrated how this process could begin with a simple paradigm shift: “Instead of thinking of it as the end of it line, think of it as the Whole Point.”

It was a commonly-held sentiment that such a paradigm shift would need to be accompanied by a more general attitude shift, however. “[Northport is] not growing because it’s hard to get to, but when people get here, it’s difficult for people to stay or develop. We need to help people open businesses and do developments, instead of shooting them down,” said one stakeholder. Another added, “Sometimes people are not willing to look at development or other improvements in a positive way. Change can be scary. When there is a project being talked about, there’s always someone that will think it’s disastrous. Transplants are sometimes the ones that don’t want any change once they get here.” Said a third, “Everyone’s first answer is NO.” Most of the respondents disavowed identification with such viewpoints, but one explained frankly that “some people don’t want more people here, me included. They want Northport to stay just the way it is.”

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES

A “bi-modal” population heavily weighted on either end of the wealth and (especially) age scales contributed to the tension between change and stasis. “Retirees are on the increase and our young families are moving to more populated cities,” summed up one participant. General agreement with this characterization gave way to sharply contrasting opinions about the next logical statement. “Communities start with young families and good schools,” averred one interviewee. “Northport Promise is a good approach, [but] school of choice kids cannot get involved in it. Why would you say ‘no’ to that?” Three people mentioned a dearth of entertainment and activities focused on younger families, with one calling all entertainment programming “geared toward the old cotton tops.” Not everyone believed that “a community or village without children is a community lost,” however. “It’s not realistic to set a goal to try to attract younger families to the Village,” said one respondent. “There are no jobs. People can’t afford to commute to Traverse City. It’s an effort in futility to spend time trying to attract young families...give it up. Let it be the best and coolest retirement community it can be. There is SO much talent here. Capitalize on what you have—those who have made their home here. They brought money, knowledge...make a viable retirement community.”

Suggestions for attracting visitors and residents of any age were largely concentrated on advertising and events. The Interlochen Chamber of Commerce and the Pure Michigan campaign were both held up as examples of successful and aggressive marketing. One participant suggested

targeting other ports for marketing efforts because “boaters are looking for places to stop.” It was generally agreed that new destinations are needed, as are efforts to capitalize on existing draws such as the lighthouse. “The water can’t be the only attraction,” said one interviewee. Lack of overnight lodging was noted as a barrier to tourism, and another stakeholder suggested taking time to ascertain the gaps between supply and demand with regard to tourism.



When asked about the current and desired roles of local government, three respondents mentioned consolidation of village and township government. One called the building department “disastrous,” citing overlapping ordinances as a source of confusion and a developmental obstacle. Two stakeholders called for incentives to attract businesses, and two called out Village government for public bickering in the past. Three people commended the job that local government has been doing and

said they didn’t have any real problems. The most highly recommended problem-solving strategies centered on inclusiveness: “acknowledge the problem and rally round to fix it,” “put things on the table and let’s find solutions together,” and “include all demographics.”

The picture that Northport’s stakeholders paint of the community they would like to see ten years into the future starts with the phrase “about the same.” The downtown is “attractive, inviting, and well-maintained”; there are tall ships visiting the marina and a little more focus on history and preservation. Merging the Village and Township has allowed the creation of a Downtown Development Authority and subsequent capture of tax increment finance dollars. Maybe a hotel or other lodging has come to town, finding it “a place where we are encouraging the new ideas that businesses bring to the table.” A “slight increase in population and employment” has advanced the economy “about 20% from where it is.” Upgraded technology draws more people in to work, yielding a diverse, affordable, thriving community. More kids mean fuller schools, and early childhood education is funded by the public rather than by parents. Creativity, energy, talent, and money have all been harnessed. There’s “a little more employment, an ice cream shop, successful businesses, and happy families.”

STRATEGIES

01 EXPLORE A DDA

ISSUE:

Downtown Northport is a quaint business district nestled around walkable residential neighborhoods and adjacent to Northport Bay on Lake Michigan. However, there are buildings in need of improvement and opportunities for business retention and recruitment, but no formal organization in place to address these needs and opportunities. The establishment of a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was discussed several years ago, but the Village Council decided to postpone action on the matter. Without a DDA, the community has limited the type of public infrastructure financing, and property and business owners cannot participate in several incentive programs such as the Commercial Redevelopment Act (Public Act 255 of 1978) which provides tax abatement for building owners who rehab their facades and buildings, and the Redevelopment Liquor License Act (Public Act 501 of 2006) which provides liquor licenses for restaurants in a downtown.



STRATEGY:

Explore with Village Council the establishment of a Downtown Development Authority.

02 BECOME A MAIN STREET ASSOCIATE LEVEL COMMUNITY

ISSUE:

Another organization which can assist communities with building improvement and business retention and recruitment is the Michigan Main Street Center. The Village has the opportunity to apply to the Michigan Main Street Center for “Associate Level” status, which provides technical assistance training to downtown business owners and community leaders on the downtown redevelopment process. This will necessitate a volunteer commitment to attend training sessions at different locations identified by the Michigan Main Street Center.

STRATEGY:

Apply for Associate Level status and identify a core group of 6 to 8 individuals who will commit to the technical assistance training.

03 CREATE A CEDS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BUDGET

ISSUE:

The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments coordinates with each County the preparation of a Community Economic Development Strategy (“CEDS”) which includes a list of economic development projects. The only project listed for Leelanau County is the redevelopment of the Sugar Loaf Resort. The lack of economic development projects for Leelanau County suggests that local units of government do not have long-term capital improvement budgets or economic/community development strategies in place. Projects listed in the CEDS are used by federal and state agencies to evaluate grant and loan funding.

STRATEGY:

Identification and preparation of a Village of Northport and Leelanau Township economic/community development project budget which includes project descriptions and proposed budgets.

04 FACILITATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING

ISSUE:

The community has identified the need for affordable housing as a means to retain and recruit employees and residents. A concern is that employees within the \$25,000 to \$40,000 salary range need to leave the community to seek affordable housing options. This situation often means salary dollars leave the local economy, and individuals with children send their children to school near their community of residence.

STRATEGY:

Work through the Michigan State Housing Development Authority to identify one or more experienced and qualified developer(s) familiar with the development of multifamily housing. Identify in advance potential sites for multifamily housing that are correctly zoned, served by public utilities, and within walking distance of the downtown.

05 LEVERAGE THE ARTS COMMUNITY

ISSUE:

The art community is an important but poorly understood component of the local economy. Artists by nature are very individualistic and self-reliant, which is exhibited in their work. However, this characteristic sometimes lessens their opportunity to market themselves and other artists, thereby reducing their impact to the local economy.

STRATEGY:

Work with an organization such as ArtServe Michigan to inventory the extent of the art communities in the Village of Northport, Leelanau Township, and the Grand Traverse Band to determine the opportunities for leveraging this segment of the local economy as part of a broader economic development strategy. Potential outcomes could be a cooperative gallery, artist-in-residence program, summer art school, specialized year-round art academy, live-work housing, etc.



STRATEGIES

06 INVITE OVERNIGHT ACCOMMODATIONS

ISSUE:

There are some Bed & Breakfast venues and a potential new “Inn” for lodging opportunities within the study area. However, the community has identified the need for a year-round lodging facility, especially to attract visitors during the winter months for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and other outdoor recreation.

STRATEGY:

Retain an experienced hotel service consulting firm to conduct a market demand and operational assessment for a lodging facility.

07 IMPROVE WIRELESS INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE

ISSUE:

A majority of community survey respondents identified the need for reliable and quality wireless service. Local elected officials have also identified the poor quality and absence of wireless services as a public safety concern in light of the increase of cell phones as the principal form of communication. The Northport Schools has noted the difficulty with reliable service, and the absence of quality wireless service could be an inhibitor for economic development.

STRATEGY:

Categorize wireless broadband service as a basic infrastructure need and service utility, and develop a partnership with providers (Verizon, ATT, etc.) to develop a reliable wireless service for Leelanau Township and the Village of Northport.

08 CREATE ONE COMMUNITY WEBSITE

ISSUE:

Nineteen and counting. That is the number of web sites discovered for the Northport area which include information on tourism, art and culture, events, etc. The web sites do not position the community as a unique “destination,” nor do they communicate a consistent message about the community. The tag line “a great place to vacation, live and work” is one of the most overused tag lines on destination and community web sites.

STRATEGY:

Develop one web site for the community which serves as a community calendar, provides tourism and recreation venues, presents market information, and offers a portal to other local web sites and area businesses.



09 CAPITALIZE ON AGRICULTURE

ISSUE:

Agriculture is the key economy of Leelanau County. And according to the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture the county's 449 farms contributed over \$35 million in products sold. As in many communities, the relationships among farmers, processors, distributors, wholesalers, etc. are not fully understood, nor are their contributions to the local economy. Further, understanding these relationships may reveal potential opportunities for new business, resulting in job creation.



STRATEGY 1:

Collaborate with the Northwest Michigan Council of Governments to assess the potential for a Food Innovation District, with a possible outcome being the establishment of an Agricultural Processing Renaissance Zone.

STRATEGY 2:

Form a working committee to reach out to NWM College, MSU, and other higher learning institutions to determine the market for a "food oriented" specialized school which capitalizes on the products and services provided in the local area.



10 COLLABORATIVE GOVERNMENTS

ISSUE:

Both the Village of Northport and Leelanau Township residents rated the consolidation of Village and Township governments in the top grouping of priorities. Consolidation can take many forms, from the sharing of services to the full merger of both entities into one form of government (either Village or Township).

STRATEGY:

Form a citizen advisory group comprised of equal numbers Village and Township residents to explore opportunities for collaboration, and evaluate the cost savings associated with each opportunity. Opportunities would range from shared services, joint commissions such as a Joint Planning Commission, and full merger options. Recommendations would be published and presented to both governmental units and the community.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Leelanau Township and Northport Leadership Team sought input from as many sources as possible to help define community priorities for the next five to ten years, including a Community Engagement Session, a public survey, and stakeholder interviews. Throughout the process, members of the Leadership Team also took several surveys as a means of synthesizing materials and drilling down to identify important and achievable priorities.

At the October 24, 2012 Leadership Team Board Planning Session, members used the surveys and documentation to compile 11 projects and programs that they felt acknowledged the inclinations of the community. After this session, members again used a survey instrument to assign each of the projects and programs a timeframe: Near Term (1-2 years), Mid Term (3-5 years), or Long Term (6 or more years). Reconvening on November 11, 2012, the team reviewed the results of the survey, discussed and modified some of the strategies, developed a consensus on timelines, and assigned responsible parties to coordinate and lead the initiatives. This exercise in collaboration was very important to help solidify the six-month strategic planning process, because the key to successful revitalization is having a person or entity to champion the process and get things accomplished.

Effective community revitalization begins with an understanding of three important and related cornerstones: vision, leadership, and collaboration. Failure to recognize and employ these cornerstones results in missed opportunities, duplication of valuable resources, waning community interest through inaction, and eventually—disinvestment. All three of these key cornerstones are evident in the Leelanau Township-Northport community. Prior projects such as the wastewater system, the public marina and waterfront park, and the Northport Community Arts Program clearly demonstrate that the community has the vision, leadership, and ability to collaborate in order to get its goals accomplished. In the Action Program on the next page, the strategies developed by the Village of Northport and Leelanau Township community to design and achieve our potential are clearly stated, assigned a timeframe, and named a responsible party or “champion” to help coordinate and steer the strategy to completion.

VISION

A description of what an organization would like to achieve or accomplish in the mid- or long-term future.

LEADERSHIP

The ability to successfully integrate and maximize available resources within the internal and external environment needed to effectuate the Vision.

COLLABORATION

The process in which two or more people or organizations work together to realize shared goals. Successful collaboration involves leadership.

LEELANAU TOWNSHIP AND THE VILLAGE OF NORTHPORT DESIGNING AND ACHIEVING OUR POTENTIAL ACTION PLAN

WHAT	WHEN	BY WHOM
Explore the establishment of a DDA	Near term	Barb Von Voigtlander Ann Marie Mitchell Bill Hendry
Wireless and broadband	Near term	Doug Scripps Lee Gardner
Inclusion of local projects in CEDS	Near term	Doug Scripps Barb Von Voigtlander
New website	Near term	Ann Marie Mitchell Lee Gardner
Assess the local art community as a segment of the economy	Near term	Andy Thomas Joanne Gasco Kathy Walraven
Collaborative governments	Near term	Doug Scripps Barb Von Voigtlander
Affordable housing	Near term	Barb Von Voigtlander Bill Collins
Specialized agriculture-related school	Near term	Karen Cross Lee Gardner
Food innovation district	Mid term	Karen Cross Lee Gardner
Hotel feasibility study	Mid term	Barb Von Voigtlander
Apply for Michigan Main Street Associate Level status	Mid term	



NORTHPORT

LEELANAU TOWNSHIP

DESIGNING AND ACHIEVING OUR POTENTIAL

www.northportmi.org

supported by

in collaboration with

B R i
Beckett&Raeder

funded by Rotary Charities

